

To: The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher, United States District Judge

Purpose: Character Letter for J. Riggs

My name is Kayla L. Riggs, wife of Justin E. Riggs. I am currently employed by Washington County Public Schools where I am a School Counselor (M.Ed); I just completed my seventh year at Smithsburg Elementary. I was previously employed with Wicomico County Public Schools for five years. I have known Justin for a total of 17 years - we began a romantic relationship in 2008, and then married in 2016. Justin and I have two children together, ages 5 and 7. The purpose of this letter is to provide an account of Justin's character, share insight on the impact of his incarceration, and encourage consideration for a shorter sentence.

Justin is a hard-working individual, someone who views others and the world in a positive lens, a person who will help anyone without hesitation, and one who takes accountability and learns from his mistakes. Apart from the six months that Justin was in the Police Academy, he has had at least two jobs at a time since he was young enough to be legally employed. These jobs ranged from Weis Markets as a teenager, umpiring throughout his teenage years and early twenties, Golden Corral while in college, the State Police, working for his Dad's landscaping and tree removal company, and finally owning his woodworking business. Characteristics that run deep in his family, Justin is hard-working and productive - he does not know how to be complacent and not accomplish tasks. He is one of the most disciplined people that I know - he does not take off work, he puts his full effort into everything that he does, and is always trying to learn more about whatever his current endeavor is. While in the State Police, Justin earned many accolades including Trooper of the Year. He also accepted overtime opportunities on a frequent basis. These characteristics of hard work and productivity are likely evident in all that Justin has been involved in at the Howard County Department of Corrections: painting murals, teaching art classes, assisting in the mental health unit, cutting hair in the barbershop, leading a cleaning crew, and more.

As stated, Justin also had a positive nature, finding the silver lining in almost every situation and always seeing the good in people. Despite the depression, isolation, shame, and deep remorse he experiences daily while incarcerated, when you speak to him he also

seems to have found a few positive takeaways from the situation. One of those takeaways is he feels stronger in his faith and relationship with God. He feels a deeper appreciation for important things in life such as time spent with family. Lastly, he has been reminded of other interests that he possesses such as artistic creativity and expression. He speaks kindly about the other inmates and has a nonjudgmental attitude towards them and their individual circumstances. I believe this quality will allow him to truly make the best of his life and future upon release.

Justin, like other members of his family, has an innate ability to help others without being asked or without hesitation. Justin has volunteered in many Mission Trips with his church, was teaching Sunday School for the high school-aged kids, has volunteer-coached our son's soccer team and baseball team, and is always a reliable friend to call upon in any situation from car trouble to moving to house repairs. Justin would put money in the offering plate at church every Sunday, even when we were young adults with little money to spare. Recently, Justin shared that he is putting small drawings with encouraging notes into the pages of books at the library at the Correctional Facility, in the hopes that when another inmate opens the book they feel a little joy. That is an example of actions that Justin would routinely take in an effort to help others without needing acknowledgement or praise. I believe Justin will be leaving incarceration with a renewed mission to help others.

Justin takes accountability and learns from his mistakes. I do believe that Justin is remorseful for his crime. When speaking to Justin, it is clear that he acknowledges the significance of his choices and the impact that they had on others. He expresses that he lost sight of himself and what was right. He has written apology letters to almost everyone in his life. The last 2 and ½ years have given him the time and space to self-reflect and grow as a person. The intention to never be away from his children again will also be a central reason for him to never break the law in the future.

I think it is safe to assume that everyone in law enforcement experiences some level of trauma. Some of the experiences that he had during his time in the State Police likely were harmful to his mental health - seeing loss of life with both adults and children, responding to horrific accidents, witnessing drug use and abuse, assisting with suicidal ideation (including finding the deceased), and meeting physical and/or verbal resistance

when arresting citizens. I often feared for his mental health knowing the traumatic events he was witnessing over a course of time. It is important to note that during his incarceration Justin has reflected on this concept - the idea that his experiences could have negatively impacted his mental health - and he acknowledges that he should have sought help to properly deal with the trauma that accumulated for him while in that role. A major area of growth I have seen from Justin is his acknowledgement that mental health does matter, and is important, and if perhaps he had sought help sooner than maybe his choices would have been different. Justin has already expressed that he will be continuing therapy when he is no longer incarcerated.

Justin was and is an exceptional father to our children. He never missed any of their activities from sporting events, to school/daycare events, to simple outings. We shared all responsibilities equally from bathing, to cooking meals, to laundry, to medical appointments. The children admire him, respect him, and can learn so much from him. They miss him every day and have experienced a major loss in his absence. They both need their father present in their lives. Justin was an active member of the church community - he has belonged to the same church his entire life and has lifelong ties with many of the church members. He has stayed in touch with members of the church through his incarceration, and the church has wrapped their arms around the children and myself in love and support. Justin is very close with his extended family, and has stayed in communication with them throughout the last 2 and ½ years. The children and I have continued to attend the monthly gatherings with Justin's extended family throughout his incarceration, and our children have a sleepover at Justin's parents house almost every Saturday night. Upon release, Justin will be returning to a supportive group of people from immediate family, to extended family, to friends, to his church community.

The impact of Justin's incarceration on his immediate family is monumental. The children have experienced a 2 and ½ year absence from their father currently. Unfortunately, this absence has occurred at a very critical developmental age for both children - our daughter being 2 years and 11 months, and our son being 3 years and 7 months, at the time of his arrest. The arrest was overnight, literally, to the children who went to bed saying goodnight to their father only to wake up the following day to his absence - they have not seen him since that night. The children were placed into therapy

approximately one month after Justin's arrest - therapy that must be paid out of pocket, \$95 per child per session. That is a financial burden that I really cannot take on with my salary, however a choice I felt was necessary to aid the children through this traumatic event. Justin speaks with the kids via phone and video call every week, and he sends them drawings on a consistent basis. However, his absence is truly felt by the children. He was involved in every aspect of their daily life (cooking their meals, coaching their sports, taking them to appointments, bathing them, and involving them in church), and to have that immediately disappear has been detrimental to the children's wellbeing. Research shows the negative impacts on a child when one parent is absent, particularly the impact on a same-sex child, so our hope is that Justin can receive a short sentence and return to his children sooner.

Arguably the second greatest impact on Justin's immediate family is financial. Immediately upon his arrest, I had to take on health insurance for myself and the children. I had to sell our home as my single salary alone could not cover the mortgage. I now rent a house that is \$1,850 a month - it was a challenge to find housing at that price, however with the goal of keeping changes as minimal as possible for the children, I wanted to stay in this area and keep the children in the same school. \$1,850 is still too high for my income alone. I had to sell various assets including: tractor, 4-wheeler, Justin's vehicle, and motorcycle. I was no longer able to keep the children in the daycare center that they have attended for several years. Justin has always been a hard-worker, and has been employed for the entire 17 years I have known him. Despite new challenges he may face finding employment, I am certain that Justin will secure employment upon release, and can then begin contributing back to our family financially as well as to society. Again, with the children at the forefront of both of our minds, we need two incomes to raise the children happily and healthily. The number of initiatives and programs that Justin has been involved in at Howard County Department of Corrections should speak to his work ethic and provide the court reassurance that Justin will seek employment upon release.

I strongly stand behind the sentiment that Justin is a good person, with a bright future, who made a life-altering mistake. I believe the way that he has used his time at Howard County Department of Corrections the last 2 and ½ years indicates the kind of person that he is, and suggests the contributing member of society he will be upon release.

I am encouraging a shorter sentence so that Justin can return home to his family, most importantly his two young children, and to his church community. Additionally, I encourage a shorter sentence so he can seek employment and be a productive citizen.

Respectfully,

Kayla Riggs

[REDACTED]
[REDACTED]



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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May 20, 2025

To Whom it May Concern:

This letter is in regard to Mr. Justin E. Riggs (DOB: [REDACTED]). Mr. Riggs has been active in numerous programs throughout the facility since his arrival. He has enrolled in the art program where participants create visual art, creative writing, and other forms of art. He also volunteered to assist with the design and creation of several murals in the facility, including our newly established Mental Health Unit (MHU). He continues to assist with the creation of several other murals in other parts of the facility that brighten up the space and create warmth in each room.

He successfully graduated from the Graphic Design class and attended meditation. He successfully graduated from the CDL program and works as a sanitation worker. Mr. Riggs also works as the facility barber. While participating in the Graphic Design class, Mr. Riggs volunteered to create a logo for the Bee Keeping students. This logo is placed onto lotions, lip balm, and honey, created from the bee keeping program. These items will be placed into a mug and will be given to victims of domestic violence. In addition, while in the art program, the Bee Keeping students were looking for a way to design their beehive boxes. Mr. Riggs assisted with the design and painting of the bee hives. He attends chapel and Spanish chapel services on a regular basis.

Mr. Riggs has also signed up to participate in Family Mediation, where he would be able to mediate and set expectations with members of his family as he plans for his transition home. He has also been selected to sign up for our parenting program, which you must be a model incarcerated individual to attend. He was also selected to pilot an Observation Aide program where he was tasked with one-on-one monitoring of incarcerated individuals who are on suicide watch. He was selected for this position because he has such a positive track record and we knew that he could be trusted with such big responsibility.

He is a go to person on his unit and someone that the officers use a lot to diffuse situations on the unit, as he is a peace maker and gets along well with everyone on his unit. I have used Mr. Riggs several times to assist me with passing out materials to the other men and assist me in various ways in the facility. Mr. Riggs

often provides me with unique ideas to assist with enhancing the facility and quality of life for the other incarcerated individuals. He created a proposal for an on-site garden that was approved and will begin soon. This will allow for incarcerated individuals to plant, nurture, and harvest fresh fruits and vegetables during their stay. Mr. Riggs is always seeking new programs and activities that he can be a part of. Mr. Riggs has a great institutional adjustment and works continuously doing various tasks and projects. Mr. Riggs has a stable home plan and support as he transitions into the community. Please do not hesitate to contact me with any questions you may have.

Dr. Alaina Elam

Sincerely,

Dr. Alaina Elam, HS-BCP, CAMS-II
Work Release & Reentry Supervisor
Howard County Detention Center





CHRISTIAN JAIL MINISTRY, INC.

January 6th, 2025

To whom it may concern,

I am writing this character letter on behalf of Justin Riggs.

Over the course of his two-year incarceration, I have had the privilege as an Associate Chaplain here at the Howard County Detention Center (HCDC), to observe Justin in various settings, as well as meeting with him weekly for individual coaching and counseling. During this time, I can truly say I have seen him genuinely demonstrate how a man can find himself at his absolute lowest, and then by the grace of God be able to be changed from within and begin to serve others out of gratitude and love for what has been done for him.

The man I now know, and who is affirmed by many others at HCDC, is a man of extreme integrity and someone who has a strong sense of moral values which he consistently lives out in a very purposeful and intentional way.

During these past 104 weeks, I have had the opportunity to have numerous deep, heartfelt, and transparent life conversations with Justin; especially as he faced many unique challenges on a daily basis. Like most people, Justin has had to not only claim his values but has been given countless opportunities to live them out. It is only through the testing of these values through both successes and failures has his "ethical metal" been genuinely tested. Although we may all fail at times, I believe the true integrity of a person can be seen by how they take responsibility for their failures and allow themselves to grow and be refined by them. Justin has proven himself to be such a person.

As a retired military officer of over 30 years; a senior Government leader; an Adjunct Professor; a church ministry leader, and an Intern Chaplain at three of our county correctional facilities, I have had the opportunity to counsel, mentor and develop men and women both locally and around the world at various levels and in various challenging environments and circumstances.

Based on this experience, I can with great confidence state that Justin is someone who has allowed himself to grow and learn from his life experiences, and as such, is now an individual of great character, maturity, sound judgement and integrity. I believe when released, he will continue to excel in each endeavor he is presented. Especially as he strives to continue to build on a solid foundation of his love for his merciful and forgiving God, his family and his friends.

Respectfully,
Ronald R. Stimeare
Colonel, United States Army (Ret)

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To: The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher, United States District Judge

Purpose: Character Letter for J. Riggs

My name is Linda Boring and I am writing a letter of character for Justin Riggs. I am a retired High School Science Teacher, a Mother, and a Grandmother. Justin Riggs is the husband of my Daughter, Kayla Riggs, and the Father of my Grandchildren, [REDACTED] and [REDACTED] Riggs. I have known Justin for 17 years.

Justin has many positive character traits. He is hardworking, perhaps the most hardworking person I know. He worked hard to put himself through college. He worked hard in the Police Academy, and he worked extremely hard as a Maryland State Trooper, earning many accolades. Even in the Correctional Facility, he is working hard at the Barber Shop, painting murals, and giving art lessons to other inmates. Justin is also a very positive and optimistic person. He always sees the good in situations and in others. He is kind and caring, and ever devoted to his family.

Justin is a Son, a Brother, an Uncle, and a beloved member of the Riggs Family. His relationship with his family is great; he is a devoted Son and a cherished Brother. He has a great relationship with his entire extended family and never misses their monthly family gatherings. He delights in spending time with them.

Justin is a father. He was so happy to become a Father. He was at both of his children's births and was involved and hands-on in every aspect of their care, from diaper changes, to bottle washing, to baths, to doctor appointments. He read to them every single night, and never missed an activity of theirs. His children adore him and have truly suffered his absence.

Justin is very involved in his church community. He has attended the same church his entire life. He has participated in every aspect of being a church member and some of his strongest lifelong bonds are with members of his church.

I believe Justin is remorseful about the crimes he committed. I know how deeply he hurts for the pain and devastation he caused his wife and children and family. I have had many conversations with Justin where he has shared with me the amount of shame and disgrace he feels about himself and his actions.

Justin's 2 and ½ year incarceration has had a huge impact on Justin. From despair, self loathing and depression, to ultimately growing and becoming a better person. He has sought counseling, read self-help books, and become a productive member of the Correctional facility. His incarceration has impacted his family tremendously. His wife had to sell their home and move into a rental home. The children have suffered the most, having their Father gone from their lives overnight and for the last 2 and ½ years.

Sincerely,

Linda Boring

Linda Boring

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]

May 10, 2025

The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher
United States District Judge

Dear Honorable Gallagher:

Hello. I am writing this letter on behalf of Justin Riggs. My name is Cathie Clemson. I am recently retired, but had been a residential property manager for my business Quality Management Services for over 30 years, managing residential rental property for other people. I have lived in Myersville my whole life, I have a Husband of 43 years, 2 grown sons and 4 grandchildren.

I am a member of and a Deacon at my Church, Grossnickle Church of the Brethren, in Myersville where I have been attending for 37 years; the same Church Justin Riggs is a member of and has been attending since his birth. I also have 2 grown sons close to the same age as Justin, who attended the same High School as Justin and his brother and sister. Needless to say, I have known Justin and his family for at least 35 years.

First of all let me say that Justin comes from a very loving, caring, Christian family. Justin's grandparents went to our Church their whole life, were both Deacons there and Justin's grandfather Ernie Leatherman led many Brethren Heritage classes at our Church as well as teaching Sunday School classes...He also I believe first started our Church going on annual disaster relief trips to different places in the United States to help clean up and rebuild houses after disasters. The reason I mention this is that Justin gave up a week of his time and went on his first disaster trip with some other men in our Church I believe the year before he was arrested (or possibly the year before). He was such a big help, according to the other men, and thoroughly enjoyed the work and fellowship with the mostly older men, I know it won't be his last disaster relief work trip.

Justin was brought to our Church as a baby and attended Sunday School classes and Church most every Sunday of his life. His Mother is one of the kindest, most compassionate women ever and both his Mom and Dad attend Church regularly and participate in leadership and helping roles. Justin himself helped do many things at Church as well, as a young child and teenager participating in plays and singing as well as lighting the candles and helping take up the offering during some Worship services. I and another man were Senior High Youth leaders while Justin was in that age group and took him on many fun trips and many "working" trips. We often put down mulch and pulled weeds for elderly people and Justin would always be there helping. He was a worker too, never slacking. We would also at Christmas time go to Walmart with money the kids had raised and buy presents for needy kids and Justin always looked forward to helping do that. He along with some of the others would often add some of their money at checkout when we were over our budget just so the kids could have more. Justin was always kind, considerate, helpful, a little funny, just one of the most pleasant kids there ever was. I have always loved that "boy" and still do. Everyone called him "Peanut" but I never would.....he is on the short side (as am I) and I often thought maybe that bothered him, so I always called him Justin instead of "Peanut".

I'm almost positive he never got into any trouble in school and was well liked by his peers and Teachers and any Adult involved in his life. He always got along with everyone as far as I know, was not a fighter or mean person. And then he grew up and joined the State Police and then later I guess the Drug Task Force. After being newly married and living a little farther away, he returned to his home area, a Father, or became a Father soon after (I can't remember that exact order), but I know he said that he wanted his children to grow up in his home town, with the people who loved him and helped him grow up. He very much adored his grandfather Ernie who I mentioned earlier, and grandmother who were both getting older and who he had spent a lot of time with while growing up. He loved them both very much. His grandmother had Alzheimer's pretty bad and Justin would always help watch over her and help her. Ernie was a woodworker and taught Justin so much about woodworking, which is where Justin got his love of woodworking from.

Not long after Justin became a Father, they moved into their home near Smithsburg where Justin had a small woodworking building and had purchased some woodworking machines or maybe gotten some given to him by his grandfather and he started making tables and other pieces of furniture, while working at his full time police job. At one point, our church asked Justin if he could make some small wooden crosses to be handed out to the kids and he was more than happy to do so....he also led a couple Children's Stories during our Worship Service, very happy to do it, and one time brought pieces of wood to make birdhouses to our picnic for the kids to make. Even though he was so busy as young families are, not even considering his full time job and part time woodworking he was doing....he was always willing to make time for whatever we asked of him; always said "sure, how many do you need; when do you need them by".

Justin's brother and sister are wonderful young people too, just like him, kind, helpful, considerate, very likable young people. Justin and his family are all good people. There are so many mean, hateful, uncaring, people out there and they are so totally opposite. I have always had a love for Justin, and always will.....Justin's parents help watch his kids, when his wife Kayla needs a break, and a lot of the time they keep them overnight Saturday night and bring them to Sunday School and Church; they come most every Sunday, just as Kayla & Justin were bringing them before Justin's arrest.

As you probably know, prior to Justin's arrest, Justin and I believe some of his family member's together had opened a business in Middletown where Justin had some of his woodworking displayed that he was trying to sell and he was trying to get that business up and running. From what I understand, this is where some money problems may have come into play and I guess this is when Justin made a really bad mistake. He wanted that business to become successful so bad. Woodworking is in his blood I think and he is so good at it. He really is very creative. I have been writing to Justin ever since he has been in jail and I had no idea until he drew some things for me and showed me some of his drawings, just how much of an artist he is. And he is not lazy....he has told me of all the different classes and things he is doing in jail, from barbering to CDL classes, to drawing murals, to reading the Bible several times as well as other books. He said he doesn't know what he will try to do when he gets out, but he is taking all the classes he can, as he doesn't like to just sit around. He has been attending Bible Study there regularly as well..

Justin always seemed to have such a good head on his shoulders and seemed to always make good decisions. I honestly could not believe what I had heard happened with him. There are so many other young kids that I have been a part of their lives as well that I could have thought maybe this could have happened with them, but not Justin. But I told him.....there is not one of us who has not made mistakes in our lives....most are minor, but then some are really big.....this one was really big and he knows it. But it doesn't change who he is.....he is still the same good, kind, considerate, loving person...he just made a mistake...and he is paying dearly for it. And he knows it and is so very aware of how this has messed up his life and his family's life.

But I know and have told him, he is only going to come out of there a better man, even though he was a great man to start with.....he has learned a lot from this mistake, he is drawing closer to God while in there, and he will be a good example of how to take what has happened, recover, overcome and then help others overcome and do better. He misses his kids so much and often says in his letters how he hopes and prays that they won't forget him and will be able to love him again. And my heart breaks for his kids every Sunday when I see them. His little girl is the spitten image of him and this past Sunday our Pastor said something about Daddies and Justin's little boy said "I can't see my Daddy". I feel so bad for those kids. He is such a good Daddy and is missing so much of these early years but I know he will make it up to them as soon as he gets out.

Please your Honor....have mercy on this young man. As I said before, I don't think he has every done a bad thing in his life.....he was honored several times as a Police Officer, he is such a devoted and talented young man, a hard worker, a good person inside and out, who just made a big stupid mistake. He was brought up to know right from wrong; I honestly have no clue as to what could have made him see otherwise in what happened.... but he is such a good, fine young man. He has not suffered any trauma that I am aware of and has never had any mental health challenges that I know of or anyone else in his family.

I apologize for this letter being so long, but I had much to say that will hopefully help Justin's case. Thank you for taking the time to read it and for your consideration in this matter.

Sincerely,

Cathie Clemson

Cathie Clemson

[REDACTED]

May 19, 2025

Dear Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher

I am writing this letter in support of Justin Riggs, whom I have known for twenty-plus years through Grossnickle Church of the Brethren. I served as his Sunday School teacher and Board Church during his tenure on the Grossnickle Church Trustees Commission. I have watched Justin grow-up and his family grow-up through the church. During my time with Justin, I have come to view him as a person of integrity and humility. Despite his serious mistakes, I believe in his character and capacity for growth and change.

Justin has consistently demonstrated values such as honesty, responsibility, and compassion in his everyday interactions. Even before this incident, he was known for his willingness to help others. He volunteers numerous hours serving our woodcutting group (donates firewood to those in need) and serving on the church's disaster response team that rebuilds houses for those impacted by natural disasters. He always worked to instill the character of paying it forward to his children and was involved in as many activities as possible. He ensured his children were in Sunday School and worship virtually every Sunday. He worked to model the way for his children. It was deeply out of character for him to be involved in any criminal activity, and he has expressed to me, I believe, through his letters, a sense of remorse and regret for what happened. He even spoke about helping others learn from his mistakes.

Justin has used this time not only to reflect on the consequences of his actions but also to better himself. He has been actively engaged in church, cutting hair and beautifying the facility. He has written about the pain he has caused others and his determination to make amends. His remorse is genuine, and it is evident that this experience has had a lasting emotional and psychological impact on him.

I believe Justin will not lose the weight of incarceration. He recognizes the trust he has broken and is committed to rebuilding it through a life of accountability and service.

His past mistakes do not define Justin but by how he has responded to them. If given the opportunity, he will continue on a path of positive change and contribute meaningfully to his community.

Thank you for taking the time to consider my perspective on Justin's character. Please feel free to contact me if I can provide any further information.

Sincerely,

Dr. Danny Rumpf

The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher

May 11, 2025

United States District Judge

My name is Kimberly Horine, a fourth-grade teacher for twenty-eight years. I am writing this letter on behalf of my cousin, Justin Riggs, who is currently incarcerated. I have known Justin my entire life and can confidently speak to the kind of person he truly is. While I recognize that Justin made a serious mistake that led to his current situation, I respectfully ask you to consider the broader picture of his character and the positive impact he has had on those around him.

Justin is a devoted father who deeply loves his two young children. He often talks about how much he misses them and the time they spent together. His love for his family is genuine and unwavering. Whether it's a family holiday, a birthday, or a casual get-together, Justin is always present, enthusiastic, and appreciative of the time we share. A special bond that Justin and I share is the love for nutcrackers. He gives me one every Christmas. One year he made a human sized nutcracker out of wood. That nutcracker brought many laughs to our evening.

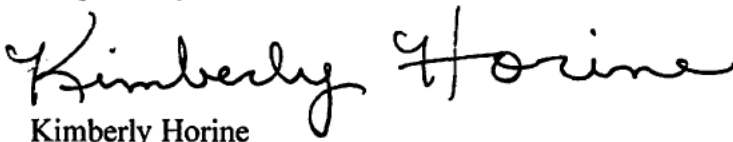
In addition to being a family man, Justin is a man of service. Through his involvement with the Grossnickle Church of the Brethren, he has volunteered his time to help others in need, particularly through disaster relief work. His willingness to help during difficult times speaks volumes about his character and sense of responsibility to the community.


On a personal level, Justin has always been generous and helpful. He has assisted me with various home projects, including fixing a mirror and building a bench—acts that might seem small but reflect his dependable and giving nature. These efforts were never asked for or expected; he simply offered his help because that's the kind of person he is.

Justin has expressed deep remorse for his actions and is committed to making things right. I believe he has learned a valuable lesson from this experience and is ready to return to being a positive and productive member of society.

Thank you for considering this letter. I hope you will take into account the totality of Justin's character and the genuine remorse he feels. I believe he still has much to offer his family and community.

Respectfully,


Kimberly Horine


Cousin

The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher
United States District Judge

My name is Karen Riggs. I'm the mother of Justin Ernest Riggs. Justin, along with his siblings, were raised the old time country way, with a strong work ethic, love of family, and a strong faith in God.

At a very young age he learned to pull weeds in the family garden, and to shovel snow. As he grew he learned how to plow and plant a garden and drive the tractor. His snow shoveling grew to include several customers. He carried many cords of wood, not only for our family but for the elderly as well. He learned how to use chainsaws and cut up trees. He learned how to weed-eat, mow, and sharpen mower blades. He worked spreading mulch for several residences. He worked to make money to help support himself, to support our family, and to save for his future. He worked like no other kid his age.

His love for his family showed when he was very young. He'd wrap his old toys to give as Christmas gifts just because he wanted to give so badly. He loved our family functions that we had several times a year, especially the food. Traditions we still do throughout the year now. He spent a lot of time with his grandparents, and became very close to his grandfather. His grandfather taught him a lot about history, taking him on many historical vacations. His grandfather, being a retired carpenter, taught Justin the craft of wood working and carpentry. Justin took this love of wood working to heart and over time opened his own store selling live edge furniture and epoxy finished furniture. His grandfather also took Justin bike riding on the C&O Canal Monday - Friday, riding twenty miles a day. This was even during football seasons two-a-days. He'd go to football practice at 6:30 a.m., then go bike riding for twenty miles, then go back to football practice in the evening. This actually earned him a big award from his football coach.

Justin spent time as a teenager at his friend's house, the home of retired Lieutenant Randall Freysz. It was here that Justin's love for law enforcement grew. It was during this time that Justin decided that the Maryland State Police was the career choice for him. He wanted to be a part of the best of the best. He proved he was worthy. He graduated and served over ten years making our state safer and risking his life while doing so. He loved being a Maryland State Trooper, and actually became Trooper of the Year twice. He loved playing in the MSP softball tournament. The last year he played his team won the tournament and he was MVP even posing in pictures with Gov. Hogan. He was very well respected amongst his peers, and proud of his accomplishments there. He transferred from being a road dog to Corporal. Justin worked so hard all his life and he prepared so hard for this career and then some time after this transfer something happened. We don't have an understanding of it really, how we got to this point where we are today. Your

Honor, something happened. He no longer could turn off the switch to his mind when he got home at the end of his shift. His day to day experiences started to weigh heavy on him. The yoke he was carrying was too much. He became lost and broken to where he couldn't think properly. I believe more needs to be done to help the wellbeing of law enforcement officers across this nation with the way our society has become so disrespectful to them. We need to work on the mental healthcare for these men and women that serve because of the atrocities that they see and experience here in our own country.

In closing, Your Honor, I plead for leniency. The two little children at home are hurting and need their Daddy. Justin has done a lot of healing over the 2 1/2 years of being incarcerated, through his cutting hair, drawing pictures, painting several murals, attending classes and worship services. We got compliments from employees about him when we would go to visit him at the facilities. He needs to move forward with his life and help his family at home. I know he will rise back up and do more good in his life and community.

Respectfully,

Karen R. Riggs

Karen R. Riggs

[REDACTED]

Justin Riggs Character Letter

The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher, United States District Judge

My name is Lorne Ridenour and I am a retired Frederick county public school teacher/football coach (30 years). Justin Riggs was a student in several of my classes as well as a player on three teams in which I served as the head coach. Justin was a great leader on his high school teams where he led by example on a daily basis. His leadership skills were the main reason he was chosen as a captain of the team his senior year. At 5'4" Justin was not gifted with size, but he made up for that, in a big way, with his daily effort and positive attitude. Justin was an unselfish teammate. He always put his team first and would have done whatever was asked of him to help his team be successful.

Justin became a leader off the field as well. He was constantly looking to help the younger students both during class and after school. He was integral in helping them to learn weight lifting and spotting form as well as the effort level required for success. Justin's attitude, effort and character were highly respected by his coaches and peers alike. He became a beloved member of our program.

After thirty years of teaching and coaching, I can say that I have never worked with a harder working and committed student. His goal driven effort and strong will were second to none. I realize Justin made a uncharacteristic mistake, but I know he is capable of being an outstanding father, husband and community member. I highly support Justin Riggs without hesitation.

Sincerely,



Lorne Ridenour
Retired-Middletown High

[Redacted]
[Redacted]

The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher
United States District Judge

Re: Justin Riggs

My name is Marion Leatherman. I am 75 years old and am retired from Frederick County Public Schools where I was a maintenance carpenter and later a locksmith. I was employed there 34 years. I now do home repair work and relock houses for different rental companies.

Justin is my cousin and I have known him his whole life. We both grew up in the Myersville area and attended the same church.

Our church has volunteers every year who go to places that have been devastated by floods, tornadoes, etc, and help to rebuild. I am the coordinator of this project. Justin went with our group several years and was willing and anxious to do whatever needed to be done. One year when we were in Tennessee, Justin got a call from his wife that their young son, Wyatt, had suffered a seizure at school and was taken to Children's Hospital in Washington, D.C. Justin drove all night to be with his son.

Justin is very supportive of his wife, Kayla. She is a weight lifter and has competed in many competitions. Whenever she would do well, he would proudly announce that in our sharing time at church. He was in church every Sunday with his family.

Justin has always had a positive, outgoing attitude and that was instilled in him by his Grandfather Ernie. Justin spent alot of time with Ernie and learned carpentry skills. Ernie was a very important part of Justin's life and served as a mentor and role model.

I think Justin is a fine young man with many wonderful qualities who made a mistake. I truly feel he is remorseful for his actions. I know he feels guilty for not being there for his wife and missing so much in his young children's lives.

Thank you for reading my letter. May God be with you and give you guidance.

Respectfully,

Marion Leatherman

[REDACTED]



HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF CORRECTIONS

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Margaret M. Chippendale, Director

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May 12, 2025

Dear Honorable Judge,

This letter is to inform you of the program participation for currently incarcerated individual Justin Riggs #104513. Mr. Riggs has excellent program participation while incarcerated at the Howard County Detention Center. He regularly attends strengthening Families Class, and Spanish Chapel. He completed Mediation, CDL Class, Graphic Design Class, and Correspond Arts Classes.

Mr. Riggs also is working In House Sanitation, Barber, MHU Sanitation, Observational Aid, and MHU Art Instructor. He also assisted in painting Murals in Program Rooms.

He has had good institutional adjustment and is extremely motivated which is demonstrated in his consistent participation in programs offered.

Sincerely,

Mary Collier

Correctional Specialist

Howard County Detention Center



The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher

May 11, 2025

United States District Judge

My name is Sharon Phillips. I am writing this character letter for Justin Riggs. I have known Justin all his life as he is my nephew. I know how serious this matter is and hope the court will show some leniency. I'm a retired banker, working for forty-four years in that profession. It is with a sincere and honest heart that I speak to his character, his past contributions to his community, and the remorse he carries for the mistake that led to his current incarceration.

Justin is a devoted father to his two young children. His love and dedication to them are evident to anyone who knows him. He has always been actively involved in their lives, prioritizing their well-being and development, and doing all he could to provide a stable and nurturing environment. The separation from his children due to his incarceration has weighed heavily on him, and he often speaks of them with a deep sense of longing and regret for the time lost.

Beyond his role as a father, Justin has been an active member of the Grossnickle Church of the Brethren, where he has been known as a kind and service-minded individual. He has participated in multiple disaster relief trips through the church, offering support and labor to communities devastated by natural disasters. His commitment to serving others during their time of need is a clear reflection of the values he holds and the person he strives to be.

Unfortunately, Justin made a poor decision that has had serious consequences. He does not attempt to hide from this fact, nor does he try to excuse it. Instead, he has expressed genuine remorse and a desire to make amends. The consequences of that decision have been severe—he lost his job, his home, and the business he worked hard to build. These losses, while significant, pale in comparison to the emotional toll of being separated from his loved ones.

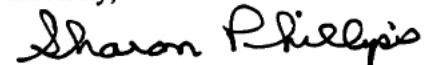
Justin shared a special bond with his grandfather—my father. From a young age, he was his Pap's constant companion in the woodshop, soaking up every lesson, every technique. The skills he learned there became the foundation of his passion for carpentry, eventually guiding him to build beautiful furniture and launch his own business.

When my father fell ill with Covid-19, Justin stayed close. In his final days, while the rest of the family had to say their goodbyes from outside the hospital window, standing in the snow, Justin was the only one able to be by his side—fully suited in protective gear. His courage and love gave my father comfort when he needed it most.

Justin is not defined by his mistake. He is a man who has served his community, loved his family deeply, and taken responsibility for his actions. I believe in his ability to learn, to grow, and to return to society with a renewed commitment to doing what is right—not only for himself but for his children and his community.

Thank you for considering this letter as a testament to Justin's character and potential for rehabilitation.

Sincerely,



Sharon Phillips

Aunt

May 11, 2025

To: **The Honorable Stephanie A. Gallagher**
United State District Judge

Dear Judge Gallagher,

Please let me begin this letter by saying that I am **very proud** to write on behalf of Mr. Justin Riggs. I was a teacher at Middletown High School for 24 years and got to know Justin and his wonderful family during his time as a student there. So I have known Justin for the last 20 years and have affectionately called him by his nickname -- "Peanut" -- the whole time I have known him.

"Peanut" was a well-rounded student-athlete at Middletown High, and he was an outstanding football player for the Knights. Though he wasn't a large kid, "Peanut" was the type of kid that all coaches love! Hard-working, competitive, dedicated, unselfish, great attitude . . . simply a super "team-first" kind of guy! And I'll always remember him as one of the happiest, positive kids I've ever worked with. He walked through the hallways with a beaming smile on his face, and he gained the respect of teachers and students alike with his positive personality!

Those are the same qualities that have served him well as a son, a husband, and a father! He's just the kind of guy that others gravitate to because of the way he has always conducted himself. Even during his time at the Howard County Detention Center, he has kept in close contact with his wife and children. When his sentence is completed and he returns to our community, I am thoroughly confident that he will be an OUTSTANDING "family man" and citizen!

"Peanut" has made the best out of a difficult situation! He is a young man of strong faith, and he has spent a lot of time reading the Bible and in prayer. He has described his time of being incarcerated as a time of "rebirth and revival," so I know that he is remorseful for the crime that he committed. No surprise to me -- because he has always been the type of person who takes responsibility for his actions.

I would like to close by saying that the court needs to know that Justin "Peanut" Riggs is a highly-respected young man in our community! We all make mistakes, and "Peanut" knows that what he did was wrong. But all of us in the Middletown area love him unconditionally, and we look forward to the day he rejoins his family and friends. I am super proud to call him a friend and brother in Christ Jesus, and I can't wait to give him a big ole hug!

With appreciation and respect,

Tim Leber



To Whom it may concern:

Over the last 16 months, I have come to know Justin Riggs well. I can say he was always there to help those around him. I suffer from chronic back problems and pain, he showed me stretches to alleviate the pain and exercises to help strengthen my back. He is a welcoming person, who is clearly very devoted to his family, friends and God. He was always willing to stand up to people trying to bully or put down others. I am grateful to have met him and gotten to know him.

Alexander Kervin

Alex K.